

So it is, during this time of tragedy, and hearing an individual Senator, Senator PRYOR, talk about the loss of loved ones and family friends and young people with bright futures, and the reflection in a day or so of the anniversary of the Challenger tragedy and the loss of seven lives, including the teacher, Christa McAuliffe, who was going to teach that lesson plan to the classrooms from space, we are once again reminded that because we dare to venture, because we are by nature explorers, there are risks, and sometimes the price to be paid is with human life. But that is not a reason not to take the risk and to boldly venture forth.

This is a good reminder for us as Americans as we face so many uncertainties—whether it be financial and our future of trying to get out of the recession, or whether it be the uncertain future in Afghanistan or Pakistan, or how the leadership of al-Qaida is being morphed into other countries, such as Yemen or Somalia, or the constant uncertainty of whether we will have a job tomorrow, or whether we can retrain for the new kinds of jobs that are coming on line.

There are a lot of uncertainties—the uncertainties of our energy future. Can we remain dependent on 70 percent of our daily consumption of oil coming from places such as the Persian Gulf and Nigeria and Venezuela? No. It is time for us to venture forth, to explore new realms, to develop new technologies and to be creative. And, of course, as the President spoke last night, we can't do that unless we have an educated workforce, which is so necessary for us to be creative. It is that creativity, that Yankee ingenuity of Americans, that keeps us competitive in the global marketplace today because we can outinvent, we can outcreate. That is the change America has.

As we reflect upon the tragedies, the individual tragedies that we have, the collective tragedy that we had as a nation—25 years ago with Challenger, several years ago with the loss of Columbia, the losses we had most recently that are seared into our hearts in Tucson—the hope that springs forth for those who are wounded, that they would come back to lead normal lives, these are our challenges. Keep at it. Keep at it.

I say this also. Because it is a time of uncertainty, a lot of pundits are having fun because it appears that NASA is in disarray. NASA should not be in disarray. We have a blueprint. We have a roadmap for the future in the NASA bill that passed this Congress—one of the few that passed in the Congress before the lameduck session. It simply says let's continue to encourage the commercial companies to develop a service of taking astronauts and cargo to and from the space station and let's see if we can do that safely, as determined by NASA, but more efficiently and, therefore, more cheaply, given the constraints of budgets.

But, at the same time, we then allow NASA to do what it does best, which is to venture out and explore the heavens. In so doing, we are going to build a new rocket that will take large components up and that will fulfill the President's goal, which is to go to Mars.

The President specifically set a timetable of 2025 to land and return safely on an asteroid. That is no easy feat, given how fast an asteroid flies through space. But it will give us new technologies, as we develop, to go to Mars.

Think of the unbelievable time it would take us under conventional technology—10 months to get to Mars. Then, once you got to Mars, you pretty well have to stay on the surface of Mars for 1 year, until the planets are realigned, revolving about the Sun, so Mars comes in closer to the Earth for the 10-month trip back. That is why we need new technologies. An astronaut who flew seven times, Dr. Franklin Chang-Diaz, a plasma physicist from MIT, is developing a plasma rocket that will take us to Mars in 39 days. Then, with that short time flying, at 400,000 miles per hour by plasma thrust, we could stay on the surface 1 month, to return to Earth without having to stay 1 year.

These are exciting new technologies. A pilot project of that plasma rocket, with the acronym VASIMR, is being developed to fly on the space station and provide a continuous pulse that will keep the space station boosted, instead of it having, in the degrading of its orbit for conventional technology, to keep boosting it.

Not only is the sky the limit, not only is the stratosphere the limit, the heavens are the limit if we as Americans will assume this can-do posture that is so typical of the personalities of explorers and adventurers; in other words, the personalities of we, the Americans.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HAGAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF PROGRAMS UNDER THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT AND THE SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT ACT OF 1958

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 366, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 366) to provide for an additional temporary extension of programs

under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read three times and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to the measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 366) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

RECOGNIZING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRAGIC EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI ON JANUARY 12, 2010

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 26, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 26) recognizing the anniversary of the tragic earthquake in Haiti on January 12, 2010, honoring those who lost their lives in that earthquake, and expressing continued solidarity with the Haitian people.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to the measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 26) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. RES. 26

Whereas on January 12, 2010, an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale struck the country of Haiti;

Whereas, according to the United States Geological Survey, the epicenter of the earthquake was located approximately 15 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti;

Whereas, according to the United States Geological Survey, the earthquake was followed by 59 aftershocks of magnitude 4.5 on the Richter scale or greater, with the most severe measuring a magnitude of 6.0 on the Richter scale;

Whereas, according to the Government of Haiti, more than 230,000 people died as a result of the earthquake, including 103 citizens of the United States;

Whereas an untold number of international aid personnel also died as a result of the earthquake, including more than 100 United Nations personnel;

Whereas, according to the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration—